



## TAKING ADVANTAGE OF NON-FARMED AREAS

Nearly every farm has irregularly-shaped areas, equipment yards, levees, roads, or other uncultivated land that can be converted to wildlife habitat without affecting farming operations. A border along a road or a one-acre corner that is not used for crops can attract a wide variety of animals, including beneficial insects. By choosing the proper plants you can also virtually eliminate expensive discing, burning, and herbicide regimens in these areas. Contact some of the agencies and organizations listed on the back cover for advice on selecting plants that will be compatible with your soils, water supplies, and crops.

# Plant perennial vegetation in areas that can stay undisturbed

## What to do:

Instead of repetitive discing, burning, and herbicide applications to keep unused areas weed-free, establish a complex of permanent vegetation to attract and sustain dozens of species of wildlife—from deer to doves. Consider planting perennial grasses, shrubs, trees, and other plants in road borders, fencerows, equipment yards, field borders, uncultivated uplands, or other areas that will remain undisturbed.

For levees, ditch banks, and canals, get some help selecting perennial plant varieties that are compatible with water flow and ditch maintenance requirements.

A wide variety of *native* and *non-native* perennial plants, shrubs, and trees can help create wildlife habitat diversity. Though they take several years to become established, native perennial vegetation systems offer many farming advantages—including suppression and elimination of invading noxious weeds. One Yolo County farmer counted more than 100 species of birds in non-farmed areas he had planted with native perennial vegetation, including nesting pheasants, waterfowl, and songbirds, as well as other species that are beneficial to farming. Many of his planted fencerows, road borders, and levee banks are connected, thus creating wildlife corridors and considerably increasing the value of this new habitat for wildlife.

## Benefits:

- Provides year-round habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species on otherwise unproductive land—particularly from fall plowdown to spring planting, when adjacent croplands are fallow.

- Provides breeding, nesting, and denning habitat for many bird and mammal species, including fawning and escape cover for deer.

- Saves money by eliminating the need for repetitive discing, scraping, and burning to keep unused areas clean.

- Saves money by gradually reducing the need to spray to control star thistle, puncture vine, Johnson grass, bindweed, and other undesirables.

- Reduces or eliminates erosion and dust normally associated with keeping these areas clean.

- Results in low maintenance habitat when fully established, which should offset the initial expenses for seeds and weed control.

- Can reduce the need for pesticides and related application expenses, in many cases, by encouraging beneficial insects and insect-eating birds.

- Increases water infiltration and decreases the rate of water runoff.

- Improves water quality, if appropriately planned, by filtering out contaminants before they enter nearby irrigation ditches or sloughs.

- Works well with drought-tolerant species on appropriate soils.

- Offers income opportunities by attracting or increasing populations of pheasants, quail, and other hunted or viewed species.

- Should not interfere with your farming operation and converts barren areas into those that are productive and beautiful.



Trees form a wind break and flowering plants and native grasses form a border along this wheat field.

JOHN ANDERSON